

City of Reading  
City Council  
Work Session  
Monday, April 16, 2007

**Council Members Present**

Vaughn Spencer, President  
Stephen Fuhs  
Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz  
Stratton Marmarou  
Dennis Sterner  
Maria Baez  
Jeff Waltman

**Others Present**

L. Churchill  
C. Younger  
C. Jones  
F. Denbowski  
L. Kelleher

**Call to Order**

President of Council Vaughn Spencer called the work session to order at 7:05 pm.

**Managing Director's Report**

Managing Director Leon Churchill reviewed the report distributed to Council at the work session. The report includes:

- RFP for a consultant to determine the feasibility of a downtown ballpark in consultation with the Reading Phillies Organization
- RFP to hire a special events coordinator
- The move of Central Processing to the County Sheriff's Office

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the need for the special events coordinator contract to be approved by Council. Mr. Churchill required that Council is only required to approve contracts over \$50,000. The special events coordinator is to be paid \$49,000.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the County will charge a fee for Central Processing services. Mr. Churchill replied that there will be no charge to the City for this service. He noted that through this shift the City will move police officers back to street patrol.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the number of officers freed through the move of Central Processing to the County. Mr. Churchill replied that two officers would be freed at each shift for a total of six.

Mr. Fuhs inquired who initiated the study for the downtown stadium. Mr. Churchill replied that the study was recommended by the City and the Reading Phillies Organization. He stated that the City has been concerned with the growing maintenance costs at the stadium and the Reading Phillies have been concerned about their growing parking needs.

Mr. Fuhs inquired if the consultant will consider other County locations. Mr. Churchill replied that the consultant is to focus on only City locations.

Mr. Fuhs questioned the \$49,000 expense for the special events coordinator and requested a copy of the contract. Mr. Churchill replied that to date the City has been contracting per event with a special events coordinator totaling \$2,000 - \$3,000 per event.

Mr. Spencer inquired if additional staff will be needed to support special events. Mr. Churchill replied that three additional part time employees are planned for the Pagoda Coffee Café. The special events coordinator will be stationed at an office located within the Pagoda.

Mr. Spencer questioned the Administration's intent by negotiating a \$49,000 contract which stays just under the \$50,000 limit that would require the contract to be approved by Council.

Mr. Waltman questioned if City Council must approve adding the part time positions. Mr. Churchill replied that Council only needs to approve positions in the Full Time Position Ordinance. He stated that the City currently uses 40-50 part time and seasonal employees. Mr. Churchill stated that the Café is to be open 25 hours per week.

Mr. Waltman questioned the history of the Full Time Position Ordinance. Ms. Kelleher stated that before 1997 Council approved the Salary Ordinance which included all positions – full time and part time – and their salaries. In 1997 the Administration switched to include the salaries for all positions in the City's budget and requiring Council approval only for full

time City positions.

Mr. Churchill explained that the special events coordinator is to provide support for tourism and visitor services.

Mr. Waltman agreed with the concept of the Coffee Café but questioned the City entering this enterprise when the City isn't meeting the demand for cleaning streets, enforcing codes, repairing street lights, maintaining parks, etc.

Mr. Churchill explained the position of the Mayor to put forth this effort as the City begins the 100 year celebration of the Pagoda.

Mr. Waltman noted his concern and questioned the City's ability to justify this expense to its taxpayers.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the need for Council's committees to take a good look at the special events coordinator activities and service goals.

Mr. Waltman questioned the Administration's intent for creating a garden at the Pagoda. He questioned if the excessive tree removal was intended to provide for garden space. Mr. Churchill stated that the garden is a concept at this point in time. It was not the Administration's intent to make space available for a garden; however, due to the removal of scrub trees space is now available.

Mr. Spencer inquired where the Administration will find funding to support the Coffee/Café and the special events coordinator. Mr. Churchill replied that funding is available under the non-departmental part of the budget; special events.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the Administration provide monthly reports on revenues and expenses to track the café's effectiveness.

Mr. Spencer questioned the expense of \$49,000 for a full time special events coordinator when the City was only paying for this service per event. Mr. Churchill replied that in addition to events the special events coordinator will also coordinate the delivery of City property for events arranged by other organizations such as parades.

Ms. Baez questioned this duplication of services as those services are already being handled well by the Public Works Department.

## **Establishment of City Comprehensive Diversity Board**

Mr. Waltman introduced the issue noting the need for a City-wide diversity board that would establish a City-wide comprehensive recruitment, application and hiring procedure for all City departments. He walked Council through the proposed ordinance.

Mr. Churchill and Mr. Fuhs suggested that this group interact with the Police Diversity Board and Fire Diversity Board while they are in existence.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for this group to be in constant consultation with the Mayor and Council.

Mr. Sterner inquired if this group will replace the Police and Fire Diversity Boards.

Mr. Spencer explained the term limits defined in the settlement agreements for the Police Diversity Board and the Fire Diversity Board.

Ms. Baez inquired if the committee will participate in the employee hiring process. She stated that during her time in the Mayor's office she learned of the Administration's approach using committees to evaluate prospective employee resumes and participate in the interview process. The committee then makes a recommendation to the Managing Director. Mr. Waltman agreed that the committee should bring back recommendations that can include that and other initiatives.

Mr. Fuhs expressed the belief that the City-wide diversity board would help find the best hiring practices for the City of Reading.

Mr. Spencer inquired if the Administration is still working to hire an EEOC officer in the Human Resources Department. Mr. Churchill replied that the City is still working to hire an EEOC officer.

Mr. Churchill stated that at current times all employees are responsible for encouraging a diverse environment.

Ms. Kelleher suggested that the ordinance be referred to the Legislative Aide Committee for review and refinement. The body of Council agreed to refer the ordinance to the Legislative Aide Committee.

## **Colonial Electric Project**

Todd Fiucci, consultant for Construction Associates, explained Colonial Electric's plan to enlarge its existing facility on Centre Ave. through the purchase of approximately 5,200 square feet of a stadium parking area from the City. Gary Koch of Colonial Electric described their partnership and discussion with the Reading Phillies and the history of the Colonial Electric business. Ms. Kelleher confirmed that Colonial Electric and Mr. Fiucci have met with the Reading Phillies Organization and the Phillies support the proposed project and believe Colonial Electric is a good neighbor.

Mr. Koch explained that through the project the Reading Phillies will be gaining 15 parking spaces.

Mr. Marmarou inquired about the dimensions of the structure. Mr. Koch explained that this will be a 26' expansion that will match the existing facility.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the next stage for the project. Mr. Churchill stated that Colonial Electric will next have to negotiate with the Public Works Department for the purchase of the property. Mr. Jones stated that Colonial Electric and Mr. Fiucci have also met with Public Works and the Planning Office who raised the concern for Reading Phillies parking. However, through plan revisions, all parties have agreed on a design that will benefit the Reading Phillies parking.

## **Solid Waste Ordinance**

Mr. Churchill stated that the Administration believes that this amendment to the Solid Waste Ordinance will address the numerous frustrations with the solid waste collection program identified by the City citizens. He stated that the amendment is intended to achieve daily visual benefits.

Mr. Churchill explained that the proposed amendment will:

- Require the citizens to report on their arrangements with independent trash haulers rather than the reverse
- Allow the City to abate and remove trash violations and bill property owners for the cost incurred
- Include phase penalties from \$50 for a first penalty to \$100 (minimum) for a second penalty

Mr. Fuhs stated that he was mystified with a comment made by a citizen at the April 9<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. The citizen questioned the need to supply a written contract with their independent hauler. He expressed concern for the requirement for the citizen to provide hauler information two times per year. He suggested that the ordinance include a requirement mandating the hauler to provide the City notice of the hauler's intent to discontinue collecting at a residential property if the property owner fails to pay the collection fee.

Mr. Waltman expressed concern that the City is providing billing services for the trash collection contractor hired for the City program. He stated that some provisions in the ordinance are good; however, some need further refinement that will provide for best practices for those hauling trash in the City and for City citizens. He suggested forming a Trash Commission that will oversee the enforcement of the Solid Waste Ordinance.

Mr. Waltman expressed the belief that this amendment to the Solid Waste Ordinance could become the third trash referendum. Mr. Fuhs agreed but added that the ordinance proposed by the City and the ordinance proposed at one time by Mr. Waltman are all dysfunctional. He expressed the belief that no change in the cleanliness of the City will result from either approach.

Mr. Waltman agreed that overall the last nine years has been a losing battle causing residents to suffer. He expressed the belief that collection services should go back to a time before curb side set out became the norm.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the provision providing for the immediate removal of trash overage or improper set out by the City's contractor. She also noted the need for the City to get a handle on those independent haulers who are unlicensed by the State DEP. She noted the continued public health and safety issues surrounding trash collection. She suggested requiring closed container storage for set out. She noted the number of health and safety problems caused by loose bag set out.

Trash Coordinator Frank Denbowski explained that loose bag set out is used elsewhere. He explained that broken bags are the fault of the property owner. He stated that currently Allied reports all broken bags on a daily basis.

Mr. Churchill noted the need for the bag program for those properties who do not have the ability to move containers from the back of the property to curbside.

Mr. Sterner expressed the belief that the current system is completely broken. He agreed with the need to adopt an ordinance with restrictions that places responsibility on the property owner and the hauler.

Mr. Waltman noted the need for the City to work to find a middle ground that will correct the trash collection problem.

Ms. Baez suggested that the City stop looking behind and move forward. She expressed the belief that the Administration should improve enforcement.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to work with the independent trash haulers and the community to improve the trash collection ordinance.

Mr. Fuhs reminded all that this has been done many times with no result. He described his experience serving on the trash committee during the Eppihimer Administration. He stated that the complaints from the independent haulers are the same as they were back in 2000.

Mr. Spencer expressed the belief that illegal dumping is a larger issue than trash set out. He noted his difficulty in understanding why the City cites property owners for articles illegally dumped in their yards and properties.

Mr. Sterner suggested using a color coded system to differentiate between the trash set out for collection by all those haulers who collect within the City. Mr. Denbowski stated that several haulers have started using this program to help identify customer set out. He described the Solid Waste Office's methods to track recurrent problems.

Mr. Churchill stated that the proposed Ordinance accepts the reality of the voter's mandate on trash collection in the November election and also seeks to address resulting issues.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the unwillingness of the independent haulers to collect trash in compliance with the City's zoned program.

Mr. Fuhs inquired if a business license could be revoked when haulers are cited for illegal activities. Mr. Churchill and Mr. Denbowski stated that they're still exploring that possibility with the Law Department.

Mr. Fuhs noted the haulers complaints that the City's zoned collection program is inconvenient to them.

Mr. Denbowski expressed his belief in the need to collect hauler information from the property owner two times per year. Mr. Marmarou inquired what the City's response will be if the property owner does not respond. Mr. Denbowski replied that property owners not responding will be placed on the City program after due process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that currently property owners must supply hauler information on their recycling bill. She inquired if this new provision will replace that requirement. Mr. Denbowski replied that as the information collected from the recycling bill is unreliable, it will be discontinued.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz reminded all citizens of the Great American Clean Up scheduled for Saturday, April 21, 2007.

Respectfully submitted by,

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Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk